

Connection

From The Director's Desk



The election is finally over! I would like to thank you for your hard work and dedication through this long and sometimes difficult process. I know many of you have worked extremely hard this election cycle. The countless meetings you attended, the phone banking and block walks; all played a major role in limiting our losses.

Unfortunately, with the changes that took place on November 4, our work load has significantly increased. Once again a majority of Americans voted against their self-interest. The losses in both the Senate and the House of Representatives have once again put the future of Social Security and Medicare in jeopardy.

Already there is talk of repealing the Affordable Care Act (ACA). This would have a devastating effect on the more than ten million Americans who have gained health care coverage since the law was enacted and the over forty nine million Americans on Medicare who have benefitted from the enhancements provided by the ACA.

I wish we had time to take a minute to catch our breath and recharge our batteries, but we don't! Our agenda is full. We must be prepared to vigorously protect Social Security and Medicare. We need to continue our fight for a trade policy that works, and goods jobs for our fellow Americans.

Congress must focus on the economy. Creating good family-supporting jobs will resolve many of the issues that angered the electorate. When people work, they contribute to the tax base that supports our government and maintains our infrastructure. Payroll contributions fund Social Security and Medicare. That is why we need a manufacturing policy that will create jobs and stop the erosion of our economy.

We need to continue our fight for retirement security and other issues important to working families and retirees. It cannot happen without all of us working as hard on our agenda as we did in this election.

Again, thank you for all that you do! I look forward to working with each and every one of you as we continue our fight to protect and enhance the quality of life of retirees and working families.

Jim Centner, SOAR Director

Editor's Note

To save the Connection editor from starvation, take his newsletter and pay for it promptly. To save him from bankruptcy, advertise in his paper liberally. To save him from despair, send him every item of news of which you can get a hold. To save him from profanity, type your correspondence plainly on one side of the sheet and send it in as early as possible. To save him from mistakes, bury him. Dead people are the only ones who do not make mistakes.

Newsletter readers would do well to remember that there are no perfect people - editors or readers. Thanks.

The Bright Side



A Republican tide swept over the country on election night, giving the GOP full control of Congress. The GOP's crowning achievement was capturing a majority in the U.S. Senate. In addition, Republicans now control 29 state legislatures, holding both chambers—two more than they did, and the most they have had since the 1920s.

There were a few bright spots on election night. Minimum wage initiatives passed even in states voting for conservative candidates, such as Alaska, Nebraska, Arkansas, and South Dakota. The city of Phoenix rejected anti-retiree pension reforms. But overall, it was not the night many seniors were hoping for, to say the least.

The New York Times reports that Congressional Republicans intend to present a plan to overhaul Medicare, calling for vouchers that they call “premium supports” to steer people 65 and over into buying private health insurance. GOP leaders also intend to set up a new commission to study options on Social Security, while relying on what one House Republican aide called “the solid foundation” of the Ryan budget plan.

According to a Hart Research survey in 11 Senate battleground states, while non-union seniors (65+) voted 21 percent more for Republicans than Democrats, union seniors voted Democratic by a margin of 35 percent.

I know that union retirees will do all we can to minimize the damage as we face attempts to chip away at our retirement security. But isn't it already nice to know it wasn't our fault?

Barbara Easterling, President of the Alliance for Retired Americans

News From Jus+care

[New research](#) suggests that adults with a purpose in life are more likely to experience healthy aging and live longer than adults who do not. So, if you haven't already set goals for yourself and a plan for achieving them, you should consider doing so. Of course, a good diet and exercise are also important!

The study, published in *Psychological Science*, looked at the data of 6,000 people over 14 years.

Strengthen Social Security by Restoring The Minimum Wage



Fact: If today's minimum wage were the same as the minimum wage in 1969 (adjusted for inflation), the minimum wage would be \$9.39. Instead, it's \$7.35, more than 20 percent lower than it was 45 years ago. Because the minimum wage has not risen with inflation, contributions to the Social Security Trust Fund are a lot less than they would otherwise be. If the minimum wage were indexed to inflation, it would strengthen Social Security.

NEWS: Americans are more satisfied with Medicare than with private insurance



According to a [new Gallup poll](#), people with government-provided health insurance, including people with Medicare and VA coverage, are more satisfied with their health care coverage than other Americans. Almost four out of five people 65 and older are satisfied with their treatment by the health care system (79 percent of people with Medicare, Medicaid and VA coverage) as compared with about three out of five people between 18 and 45 (61-66 percent).

More specifically, people without health insurance are the least satisfied with the health care system (36 percent). People with military or veterans coverage are the most satisfied (77 percent) and people with Medicare or Medicaid are the next most satisfied (76 percent).

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NEWS: More Americans planning to work past age 65



More Americans are planning to delay retirement and work longer. A new [CBS news poll](#) shows that, in 2014, a little more than half of Americans who have not yet retired say they plan to retire by the time they are 65. In 2005, more than two-thirds (67 percent) planned to retire by age 65.

Equally noteworthy, three times as many people today expect to retire in their seventies (22 percent) than expected to do so in 2005 (8 percent), according to the poll. Yet, of retirees polled, 79 percent say they retired by the age of 65. Only seven percent say they were over 70 when they retired.

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Managing Migraines by Dr. Salomeh Keyhani, MD, MPH



If you have ever suffered from a migraine, you know how awful it can be. I want to let you know that migraines are fairly common. The Centers for Disease Control [reports](#) that more than 20 percent of women surveyed said they had suffered from a migraine or severe headache in the last three months and 10 percent of men. And, it is estimated that up to [4 percent](#) of the world's population suffers from headaches for at least fifteen days of a given month.

You might avoid getting them, if you can [figure out](#) what might be causing them. Have you noticed that certain foods or drinks trigger your migraines? Have your sleep patterns changed or are you experiencing more stress than

normal? Medications, especially those containing estrogen, can cause migraines. Bright lights or noises could be other triggers.

Once you know you are prone to migraines, there are [two routes](#) to go to help manage them medically. You can use pain medication after their onset. Or, you can use of preventative medications. If you are suffering from migraines you should talk to your doctor to discuss medication options and their possible side effects as well as strategies to prevent migraines from happening in the first place.

Billy's Banter



As many of you know, I live in western New York. We have just been through a snow storm of epic proportion. Some areas have had a snow fall of over seven feet in less than a five-day period. Fortunately, my community was just outside of the most severe snow. We received less than three feet, which doesn't mean much to us.

What I want to talk about is the response from the people who were affected by the storm. I will not identify which political party was in charge of what community, although they did line up pretty well with each other. Many community leaders thanked the State and County leadership for their fast response to the impacted areas; while other elected officials could not find anything that the State or County did right for their communities. They kept complaining about the speed or amount of help that was provided or pushed off all issues onto other leaders; claiming they could do no more with the resources they had available.

Most of these complainers are the same politicians who condemned the wage and benefit packages their municipal employees earned and many came into power pledging to reduce costs by cutting workers and slashing services. Well, they got their wish this week.

This week, in western New York, makes it clear that you get what you pay for. Those who demand lower prices from the big box stores and not caring where the products come from; those that demand cuts in taxes at any cost and those that think reducing services and benefits save them money, all saw what short sighted thinking got them this week.

I hope the people in our two countries look at western New York and realize the benefit of long-range planning versus short-term solutions. We need to realize that we are in this together and stop thinking about what can benefit me today without taking into account the long-range impact of those decisions.

Bill Pienta, SOAR President



Seven tips for a good night's sleep from the [National Institute on Health](#)

1. Develop a sleep routine: Set a daily bedtime and wake-up time and stick to it.
2. Exercise daily: Even 20 to 30 minutes a day can help you sleep soundly.
3. Avoid alcohol, cigarettes and caffeine, especially directly before you go to sleep.
4. Relax before bedtime: Do something quiet and calming--take a bath, listen to classical music, read a book.
5. Let the sun wake you up. Bright sunlight has been shown to reset your biological clock.
6. Only go to sleep when you're ready to fall asleep. It can be anxiety-producing and cause insomnia to lay in bed awake trying to sleep if you don't feel tired.
7. See a doctor if you continue to struggle to fall asleep or stay asleep at night. There are effective cures.

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Jim Centner, Director/Editor
Lee Etta Hairston, Copy Editor

Phone:
866-208-4420

Email
jcentner@usw.org

Address editorial material to:

SOAR
60 Blvd of the Allies
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

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Elaine Sez...

Do you know what would have
happened if there had been Three
Wise WOMEN instead of Three
Wise MEN?

The WOMEN would have:

- Asked directions,
- Arrived on time,
- Helped deliver the baby,
- Cleaned the stable,
- Made a casserole, and
- Brought practical gifts (like
diapers!)

Merry Christmas Everyone

The McNeil Report

ATTORNEY: "What was the first thing your husband said to you that morning?"

WITNESS: he said, "Where am I Cathy?"

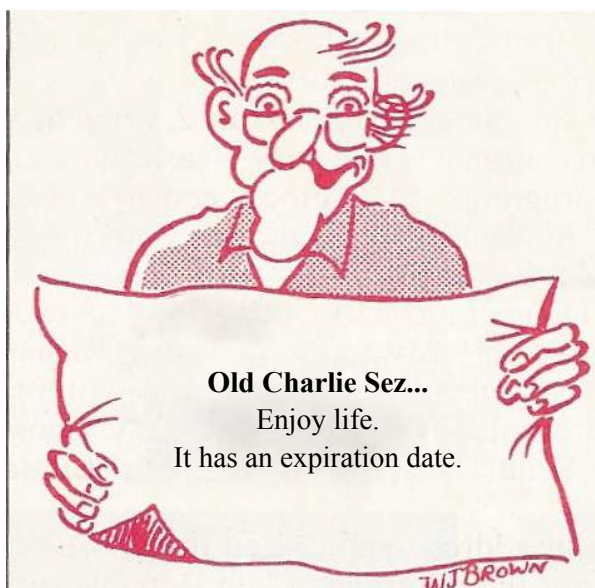
ATTORNEY: "And why did that upset you?"

WITNESS: replied "My Name is Susan"

Three sisters age 92, 94 and 96 live in a house together. One night the 96 year old draws a bath, puts her foot in and pauses. She yells down the stairs, "Was I getting in or out of the bath?" The 94 year old yells back, "I don't know, I'll come up and see." She starts up the stairs and pauses, then she yells, "Was I going up the stairs or coming down?" The 92 year old was sitting at the kitchen table having tea listening to her sisters. She shakes her head and says, "I sure hope I never get that forgetful." She knocks on wood for good measure. She then yells, "I'll come up and help both of you as soon as I see who's at the door."

From the Editor

- Don't forget that this newsletter is online at <http://www.usw.org/act/activism/soar/resources/soar-chapter-connection>. Please share it with your chapter members.
- District and Chapter articles and photos should be emailed to the SOAR office at the address at the left.



Connect The Dots



With the 2014 elections behind us we will be confronted with the results and what that could mean to all of us. The Republicans will control both the Senate and House of Representatives based on a mandate representing only 17 percent of registered voters. I find some facts regarding the election somewhat confounding and very concerning.

The facts: the lowest turnout of voters since 1942; in states that had voter initiatives such as increasing the minimum wage, including what are called red states or Republican leaning, they were passed overwhelmingly; older white males seemed to vote Republican, and the economy was a major concern (which is understandable).

The question that comes to my mind is why are so many voting against their own best interest? Why would people vote for someone who is against an increase in the minimum wage? Why would anyone vote for a party that stands for cutting Social Security benefits and eliminating Medicare as we know it? Why are people voting for candidates that stand for the same policies that caused our economic crash in 2008?

I can only conclude that we have a failure of our media to accurately report the important issues. More significantly, with the unlimited money poured into the election process our democracy is being hijacked by big money interests.

It is more important than ever that we pay attention, get the facts before we vote and connect the dots and make sure we vote.

P.S. Social Security Administration announced a 1.7 percent cost-of-living increase in Social Security benefits for 2015, an average of approximately \$22.00 per month. Premiums and deductibles for Medicare Part B for those with incomes of \$85,000 or less per year will remain unchanged. Bad news - drug prices are expected to increase.

Tell Congress: Protect and expand Americans' earned benefits

Right now, a majority of Washington politicians favor cutting Social Security and Medicare benefits and shifting additional costs onto 50 million older adults and people with disabilities.

The overwhelming majority of people with Medicare live on small fixed incomes, with half living on incomes under \$23,500. They depend on Social Security and Medicare for their retirement security and are [less likely to support members of Congress who vote to cut these programs](#).

We need to strengthen these programs and protect earned benefits.

We can expand Social Security by ensuring the very wealthy pay the same share of their income for Social Security as everyone else.

We can strengthen Medicare if Congress allowed it to negotiate prescription drug prices rather than allowing the drug companies to set exorbitant prices for their drugs -- twice as high here as in every other wealthy nation.

Immigration Reform will strengthen the Medicare and Social Security Trust Funds.

Report From the Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM)



Brothers and sisters, you may have heard that the Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM) partnered with researchers from Duke University to publish a new infrastructure report. The study, "Infrastructure Investment Creates American Jobs," outlines the obvious problems with our roads, bridges, airports and transit systems. To put it plainly, the infrastructure that underpins our economy is falling apart, and if Congress doesn't act to fund necessary upgrades and repairs, we could be in serious trouble. Learn more here: <http://goo.gl/Q0G4D7>

Consider this:

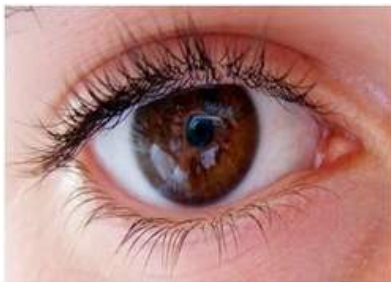
- * 1 in 5 roads are in poor condition;
- * 1 in 5 bridges are structurally deficient; and
- * Americans collectively spend roughly 600,000 years stuck in traffic annually.

We know that for every \$1 billion spent on upgrading and repairing our infrastructure we can create 21,671 jobs. And every state could use more jobs, right? Well, while we wait for Congress to act on this very important issue, there's something you can do to help. At AAM, we've been collecting pictures from across the country to show Congress why it's time to #InvestinUS on our Pinterest page here: <http://goo.gl/x4xoAv>.

Help us get the word out by sending in pictures from your community that shows how bad our public infrastructure really is. Always avoiding that mean pothole? Take the long way home to miss the uneven train tracks? Have a scary bridge that you hate to drive over? Take a picture, email it to us at info@aamfg.org and we'll add it to our page. Working together: It's that easy, my friends!

Rachel Bennett Steury, AAM Field Coordinator, Alliance for American Manufacturing, 260-633-1060

Take Good Care of Those Eyeballs



Sunlight might be the best disinfectant, but it also might increase the risk of glaucoma and cataracts.

If you ever wondered why you should wear sunglasses, researchers led by Dr. Louis Pasquale of Harvard Medical School have a good answer: sunlight can increase the likelihood of "exfoliation syndrome," which is tied to glaucoma and cataracts.

The good news is that sunglasses reduce exposure to the sun's ultraviolet radiation. The researchers found that each one percent increase in sunglass use by Americans during the summer over a lifetime led to a two percent lower

risk of exfoliation syndrome. They could not find the same result from wearing brimmed hats. To read more about their findings, [click here](#).

Emeritus Report Canada



It's just November. I'm looking out the window as I sit here at my desk trying to write something for the SOAR Connection. Everything out there is white. That's right, everything is covered with snow. Winter is not supposed to start until the middle of December. Wow, it's really beautiful, but it's too early. I'm not ready for it.

I just found out from our local paper that our beautiful flag with the Maple Leaf is 50 years old. The story goes on to say that the young lady that sewed the flag together, was honored and her Singer sewing machine will be kept by our Federal Government.

The Ontario Provincial New Democratic Party (NDP) held a very successful convention this past weekend. Over 1,000 delegates were in attendance. There were a great many items up for discussions on the future of the Party. Our NDP leader, Andrea Horwath's job was on the line. She came through with just around 70 percent of the vote to retain her leadership.

Locally, we had a Municipal election and once again the people of Toronto voted to elect a Conservative supporter as their mayor. We working and retired people were supporting Olivia Chow, widow of the late Jack Layton NDP Federal leader and a proven past councillor member before she ran successfully for the NDP Federally. I feel that a lot of people chose to vote strategically in order to make sure another Ford did not get elected. Big mistake. If Mr. Tory is wise, he will look closely at her platform and adopt at least some of the work she was going to do. She was sure on the right track of what Toronto needs.

In conclusion, Ruth and I wish all SOAR members a very Merry Christmas and a healthy Happy New Year.

Dan McNeil, Emeritus Member

How Can You Help Someone You Love Decide When To Stop Driving?



Getting older does not mean that you cannot continue driving. But, the last thing you want is for people you love to hurt themselves or others. As people age, they can lose mental and physical functions that enable them to drive safely. The [National Institute on Aging](#) has several tips for helping people decide whether they should continue driving or rely on other forms of transportation.

Responsible driving depends upon good reflexes. And, good driving is often about making snap decisions. So, if people you love have trouble seeing, turning their head, climbing stairs, responding quickly, or confuse the brake and the gas pedals, those are signals that driving might put them and others at risk. Similarly, if driving makes them anxious, stressed or tired, those could be indicators that it's time for them to stop.

People who have trouble keeping up with the flow of traffic, seeing when cars are coming at them, making sense of the traffic signs on the road or staying in the proper lane should likely also not be driving. They will know whether they are having problems if other drivers are honking at them, if they had minor accidents or have been pulled over by a traffic officer.

For sure, once people you love lose their vision, hearing, reflexes or have had a stroke or another serious condition, you should advise them to take a driving test every three years. If they continue to drive, encourage them to stay home in bad weather and, if possible, take alternate routes on quieter roads that are less stressful. For more information, click [here](#).

Source: **Jus+care** web site